

**WINNIPEG, MANITOBA**

[SPENCENEIGHBOURHOOD.ORG](http://SPENCENEIGHBOURHOOD.ORG)

# Spence Neighbourhood Association

Spence neighbourhood, located in inner-city Winnipeg, was, until recently, in serious decline. Between 1991 and 1996, two out of every three Spence residents moved out of the area.

In 1997, five community volunteers decided to improve the condition of their neighbourhood by creating a non-profit housing group, now known as the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA). Those dedicated volunteers started out by cleaning a single back lane and then renovated a home for a young family shortly after.

SNA started expanding their activities and began the “Light Up Our Neighbourhood” program, which improved community safety by providing dusk-to-dawn security lighting for homes in the area. The Lighting project provided an opportunity for volunteers to meet hundreds of residents in the area who benefited from the program. This networking opportunity generated more ideas for projects, inspired more volunteers to join the effort, and created more energy to tackle further issues. The organization continued to grow and eventually acquired the resources to hire staff members. In

January 2000, the organization moved to Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre at 430 Langside, where activities and programming continued to grow. With this growth, the organization made the shift to a representative community development group and correspondingly created a new constitution and elected a board of directors from the neighbourhood.

Today, Spence Neighbourhood Association is funded to provide various programs for the community focusing in areas such as: safe and affordable housing (they offer a rental safety program and assistance with grants and housing incentives); ➔



→ employment; safety; greening (composting for community, greenhouse, community gardening, kids gardening, establishment of Aboriginal spiritual park); youth programming (First Jobs 4 Youths, sports, education, Three stars and a wish, restorative justice, west central youth outreach); community economic development (skills bank, tool lending library, ID programs); and community research. Each of these programs have contributed to the overall goal of building a greater sense of community and pride in the neighbourhood.

The SNA is committed to being run by and for local residents. Therefore, the long term plan is created together with the community, the board of directors is elected from the community by the community, and the committees that oversee the work and resource allocation are also made up of members from the community. One example of an initiative that is creating economic opportunities in the community is First Jobs for Youth. First Jobs is a youth program that supports the employment of youth between the ages of 14 to 18 by providing opportunities to work in community gardens and youth programs during the summer. In the fall, participants receive an eight week job placement with a business in the community. The graduates are hired on long-term basis by the City of Winnipeg, Fort Whyte Alive, West End BIZ, among others. In addition, a youth employment councilor is made available to help youth with resumes and job interview skills. Workshops and training events are also held year round to assist youth in finding employment. Most

SNA continues to grow as an organization of the community, by the community and for the community.

recently, the SNA adopted a social enterprise model by creating the Community Research Hub, which looks to build on the skills of local residents in conducting community-based research in order generate revenue for local residents.

SNA greening initiatives provide further supports the healthy development of teenagers by offering positive options that would otherwise be unavailable to them. The SNA's greening initiatives range from community gardens, greenhouses, composting programs, and recycling initiatives. In keeping with their community development philosophy, the Spence Neighbourhood Green Plan is a five year strategy built through community consultation. The SNA believes that achieving this plan will help improve community health, offer learning opportunities, increase safety and environmental responsibility, and increase social capital and community development.

SNA also administers a granting program for community initiatives that support the identified priorities of the community. Up to \$5000 is available for a wide range of projects such as tree banding, street parties, community meetings, improvements for a community space, street cleaning, a public art project, and support for local sports teams.

The Spence Neighbourhood Association is a true CED organization that is working at comprehensive and integrated community-led approach to community renewal and poverty reduction. SNA continues to grow as an organization 'of the community, by the community and for the community.'